

## **Erie County Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP):**

478 Main Street, 1st Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202

HEAP Hotline: 858-7644  
HEAP Application Request Line: 858-1969

HEAP Office Hours 8:00am-4:00pm

### **Erie County 2014-15 Home Energy Assistance Program**

HEAP is federally funded assistance with home heating costs and energy conservation for eligible households. Program components include benefit assistance for heat and electricity, furnace repair or replacement, weatherization referral, and cooling assistance (in summer months-based on medical necessity).

HEAP Early Outreach program access mailing begins **August 25, 2014**

HEAP Heating Equipment (Furnace) Repair and Replacement opens **November 10, 2014**

HEAP Regular Benefit, for main source of household's heat, opens **November 17, 2014**

HEAP Emergency Benefits for main source of heat and heat-related electricity open **January 2, 2015**

### **HEAP- Benefit assistance with Heating and Electricity costs**

- 1. Early Outreach and SNAP or TA AutoPay for Regular HEAP**
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**HEAP Income Guidelines 2014 – 2015; Monthly Household Gross Income Cannot Exceed:**

| <u>Household Size</u> | <u>Gross Monthly Income</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1                     | \$2,194                     |
| 2                     | \$2,869                     |
| 3                     | \$3,544                     |
| 4                     | \$4,219                     |
| 5                     | \$4,894                     |
| 6                     | \$5,569                     |
| 7                     | \$5,696                     |
| 8                     | \$5,822                     |
| 9                     | \$5,949                     |
| 10                    | \$6,076                     |
| 11                    | \$6,534                     |

**1. Early Outreach and SNAP or TA Auto Pay for Regular HEAP:**

**Early Outreach:**

Households that received HEAP last season and have a senior citizen, disabled individual, or child age 5 or younger may receive an Early Outreach application in late August or early September 2014. These households may apply for HEAP before the season officially opens.

The only documentation required for an early access application is copies of earned income, if any (last 4 weeks proof of wages -pay stubs).

Applicants who received HEAP last season are not required to submit proof of Social Security, SSD, workers comp, unemployment, utility bills, or proof of residency.

Households who believe they should have received an Early Access application but did not, or who need to replace a lost or damaged application, may call the HEAP Hotline at 858-7644 for assistance.

The mail in application is for a Regular HEAP benefit only, for household's main source of heat.

We will begin notifying companies of approvals from early access applications when program opens. The approval may restore service, or will create a 30 day hold from termination of service, or will result in a delivery of fuel, depending on the circumstances.

**No HEAP Benefits resulting from early access approvals will be promised or issued to heat supplier until HEAP officially opens on 11/17/14.**

#### SNAP or TA AutoPay:

Households currently receiving SNAP or TA assistance may qualify for an AutoPay HEAP benefit that will be processed and credited automatically to heating bill in December or January. Households wishing to check the status of an Auto Pay may call the HEAP hotline at 858-7644 beginning October 15th. If household missed the Auto Pay, they may submit a HEAP application for processing prior to season opening.

Early Outreach and Auto-Pay eligibility notices will be mailed in December, and benefits should appear as a credit on December or January heating bills.

HEAP can notify heating suppliers of benefits beginning November 17, 2014. If necessary, the approval may restore service, or create a 30-day hold from termination of service, or result in a delivery of fuel.

The AutoPay is for a Regular HEAP benefit only, for household's main source of heat.

**No HEAP Benefits resulting from AutoPay will be promised or issued to heat supplier until HEAP officially opens on 11/17/14.**

## **2. Regular HEAP benefit:**

Regular HEAP for household's main source of heat is available beginning November 17, 2014.

Gas and Electric benefits appear as a credit on bill about 60 days after approval. Oil, propane, wood, pellets, and coal benefits produce a delivery of fuel totaling benefit amount.

Household does not need a shutoff notice or low fuel to receive Regular HEAP.

If there is a shut off notice, a 30 day "hold" is placed on heat account if benefit is approved.

If there is a shut-off notice, service will not be shut off during that 30 days and utility company will not seek collection for the portion of the total bill equaling the benefit amount.

If service is Off, benefit approval may restore service depending on total amount owed.

There is no resource test for Regular HEAP; HEAP will not examine household's savings or checking accounts etc.

Regular HEAP Benefit Amounts:

**\$350 base benefit-** Natural Gas or Electric Heat

**\$575 base benefit-** Deliverable fuel (oil, propane, kerosene)

**\$500 base benefit-** Deliverable fuel (wood, coal, pellets, corn)

**Add on \$25-** Add an additional \$25 to base benefit if Household has Tier 1 income

**Add on \$25-** Add an additional \$25 to base benefit if there is a child age 5 or under OR an adult over the age of 60 OR disabled individual in Household

Renter's Benefit for Heat Included in Rent:

If Heat costs are included in Rent (NON SUBSIDIZED RENT ONLY), benefit amount is based on household income:

- \$35 benefit if income is Tier I
- \$30 if income is Tier II

**If Heat is included in Rent, and Rent is subsidized, household is not eligible for Regular HEAP.**

**3. Emergency HEAP: (Shutoff Notice or Low Fuel Supply is Required)**

Emergency HEAP benefits are available beginning January 2, 2015.

One Emergency "Heating" benefit, for main source of heat is available- IF there is a shutoff notice or low fuel supply & Regular benefit was already received.

One Emergency "Heat-Related" electricity benefit is available- IF there is a Shutoff notice and electric is needed to run furnace or thermostat.

**There is a Resource Test for Emergency HEAP:**

Household may have no more than \$2000 (or \$3000 for a household with a member age 60 or older) in available liquid resources (\$\$ in savings, checking, stocks, bonds, CDs,

IRAs, 401k). Monthly living expenses in savings are not counted and are determined on a case-by-case basis. Countable (liquid) and Excluded Resources are listed below.

**Emergency HEAP Benefit Amounts:**

- \$350- Natural Gas Heat
- \$490- Electric Heat – PSC and municipal electric companies
- \$575- Deliverable Fuel (i.e. oil, propane, kerosene)
- \$500- Other Fuel (coal, wood, wood products)
- \$140- Heat Related Electric – PSC and municipal electric companies

**4. How to Apply for HEAP: EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 17, 2014**

**If Service is OFF, or household is OUT of heating fuel:**

- Household member or authorized representative\*\* must report to HEAP for assistance:
  - **478 Main Street, Buffalo** (8:00am-4:00pm)- All Households receiving TA or SNAP, and Heads of Household under 60 years of age, non disabled
  - **291 Pearl Street, Buffalo** (8:00am-4:00pm)- Heads of Household 60 or older, or under 60 and disabled (not receiving TA or SNAP)

**If Service is ON, but household has a current shut-off notice or low supply** (less than ¼ tank) of heating fuel:

- Household member or authorized representative may call the HEAP Hotline at 858-7644
- A HEAP Hotline representative will examine the situation and direct the application process accordingly. Client may or may not need to report.

**If Service is ON, with NO shutoff notice and NO low fuel supply:**

- Household may call the HEAP Application Request Line at 858-1969. An application packet will be mailed and there is no need to report

*\*\*An authorized representative may apply on behalf of individuals unable to appear at HEAP or unable to call the HEAP hotline. A signed and dated note from the applicant authorizing the individual to apply on their behalf is required.*

Or, clients may apply for Regular HEAP electronically by visiting: [MyBenefits.NY.gov](http://MyBenefits.NY.gov)

**5. Documentation Requirements for Regular HEAP:**

**1. If Household is receiving TA or SNAP:**

Many Active TA or SNAP households have Regular HEAP calculated and sent to heating supplier automatically (AutoPay). No application for Regular HEAP is required for these households. If Auto Pay is not received, a HEAP application must be submitted with a current utility bill.

To check the status of an AutoPay- HEAP Hotline 858-7644.

To request a HEAP Application- Application Request Line: 858-1969.

**2. If Household is not receiving TA or SNAP & received HEAP assistance last season:**

A completed and signed HEAP application & the following documentation is required:

- Proof of GROSS EARNED INCOME (Wages) received with the last 30 days for all Household Members
  - If paid weekly, last 4 paystubs
  - If paid bi-weekly, last 2 paystubs
- Proof of UNEARNED Income is **NOT** Required (Social Security, Pension, Unemployment, Workers Comp, Disability, etc.) If you moved or there are new members in your Household, you must document those changes.

**3. If Household is not receiving TA or SNAP & did not receive HEAP assistance last season:**

- A completed & signed HEAP application and the following Photo-Copied Documentation is required:
  1. Proof of GROSS income received within the last 30 days for all household members
  2. Wages: If paid weekly, last 4 paystubs
  3. Wages: If paid bi-weekly, last 2 paystubs
  4. Award letters- if Applicable, for Social Security, Pension, Unemployment, Workers Comp, Disability, etc.
  5. Yearly statement of interest received (savings, checking, CDs, money market account, etc.)
  6. Dividend proof (stocks, bonds securities, etc.)
  7. Social Security Numbers for all household Members
  8. **One (1) form** of ID for all household members (Birth Cert. OR SS Card OR Driver's License OR School ID, etc.)
  9. Proof of Residency (Mortgage proof or Rent/Lease information)
  10. Current Utility Bills (Heat & Electric)

**6. Documentation Requirements for Emergency HEAP:**

If Household received a Regular HEAP benefit this season:

- Shut-off notice or statement of low fuel supply from company
- Proof of all household liquid resources
- 1 form of ID for any new household members (that were not listed on Regular HEAP application)

If Household did not receive a Regular benefit this season:

- For main source of heat, no Emergency benefit is available until Regular benefit is exhausted.

Applicant may apply for Emergency for “heat-related” electric, and Regular benefit for main source of heat simultaneously, and must provide all documentation for Regular & Emergency HEAP.

## **7. Subsidized Rent & HEAP Eligibility:**

If household receives Government Rental Assistance (Section 8, Belmont, HUD, etc.):

- If Heat is included in rent- Not eligible for assistance with heating costs
- If Electric is included in rent- Not eligible for assistance with electric costs
- If Household pays directly for Heat
  - Eligible for Regular and Emergency HEAP towards heating bill (see above for benefit amounts) – “Heater’s Benefit”
- If Household pays directly for “Heat Related Electric:\*\*
  - Eligible for Emergency HEAP "heat related" electric benefits (see above)

## **8. Wage Calculation for HEAP Applications:**

HEAP calculates all wages using these formulas:

- Paid Weekly –  $((4 \times \text{Weekly gross})/4) \times 4.3333$
- Paid Bi-Weekly –  $((2 \times \text{bi-weekly gross})/2) \times 2.1666$
- Paid Bi-Monthly – (add 2 gross pay amounts- no other calculation)

## **9. Liquid (countable) & Excluded (not countable) Resources for Emergency HEAP**

**Countable (these are counted for Emergency HEAP resource test):**

- Cash
- Checking and/or savings account balances
- Stocks/bonds
- Time deposit certificates
- IRA accounts, including remaining amounts from a closed out IRA
- Lump sums from sale of property or insurance settlements and balances from any other lump sum not specifically excluded
- 401(K) and other retirement accounts
- Income tax refunds (except EITC payments)
- Any other available funds not specifically excluded

**Excluded (these are not counted for Emergency HEAP resource test):**

- Amounts designated for an allowable current monthly living expense such as food, shelter, employment-related expenses, etc.
- Money earmarked for payment of the current year's property and/or school taxes for the primary residence
- One burial plot per household member
- One written pre-arranged burial agreement with a cash value not exceeding \$1,500 per household member and interest on the burial account
- Accounts, such as PASS accounts, designated by the Social Security Administration as exempt from SSI resource limits
- Real and personal property
- Equipment
- Automobiles and other vehicles
- Payments from reverse annuity mortgages
- Loans (including college loans, personal loans, home equity loans )
- Credit cards or advances from credit cards
- Individual Development Accounts (IDA)
- Although a household is not required to obtain a non-utility fuel delivery on a credit basis, those households who have sufficient resources to pay for the delivery may be required to obtain the delivery and make payment when the resources can be accessed.

**10. Heating Equipment Repair or Replacement (HERR) and other furnace Assistance, Weatherization Assistance Program, EmPower NY, Lifeline**

**1. HERR**

HERR may assist HEAP-eligible homeowners, who have minimal financial resources, with the cost of repair or replacement of essential heating equipment (furnace, boiler, etc.).

To apply, HOMEOWNER or authorized representative\* must apply in person with ALL necessary documentation. \*An authorized representative is permitted to apply on behalf of Homeowner, but must provide a statement signed by the Homeowner.



Reasonable accommodations will be explored for homebound applicants to assist with application requirements.

**HERR Documentation Requirements:**

- Two (2) furnace estimates from participating HEAP contractors
  - Household may call any contractor they want for an estimate, but contractor must be a participating HEAP contractor in order to receive approval.
  - A list of participating vendors is available at the 291 Pearl St. Intake window
  - Clients should ask contractors whom they call if they participate with HEAP, and ask for a FREE estimate.
  - HEAP will not reimburse homeowner for cost of an estimate & all participating contractors are supposed to provide free estimates to HEAP applicants.
- Proof of homeownership- Deed to home
- Proof of household resources
  - Current checking and/or savings account statements, proof of any stock, bonds, CDs, IRAs, etc.
- 1 form of ID for all household members
- Proof of income for all household members received within last 30 days

**IMPORTANT REMINDERS**

- Renters are not eligible for HERR. Landlords may not apply for HERR for rental properties.
- Homeowners must own and be residing in the property for the 12 months prior to the HERR application.

**Other furnace Assistance (if HERR is closed):**

**National Fuel Emergency Heating Repair or Replacement Program**

- The customer's main source of heat (furnace) must be totally inoperable
- The applicant must own the home
- The entire household; ALL members of the household, are age 62 and older, or age 18 and younger, or blind, or permanently disabled, or on life support.
- Must be low income. Regular HEAP income guidelines are followed but higher income cases may be reviewed on an exception basis.
- Clients may call 686-6123 or 1-800-365-3234 for assistance.

**Erie County Emergency Aid for Families/Adults:**

- Erie County Funded 0% Loan, or Grant if household is receiving SSI.
- Erie County Department of Social Services Emergency Services Unit: 478 Main Street, 1st floor

### **Home Performance w/ Energy Star- People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH)**

- See below

## **2. Weatherization Assistance:**

### Home Performance w/ Energy Star- PUSH Buffalo (serves all of Erie County)

Low-interest loan/grant through NYS, for Energy Related home improvements, may be up to 50% subsidized with a grant for eligible households. Loan can be paid “on bill” (equaling cost saved each month on energy bills based on installed measures). Contact 884-0356 for details

### Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP):

HEAP Eligible Households qualify for WAP.

WAP is NO COST home weatherization services and energy conservation improvements including attic and wall insulation, weather stripping, caulking, testing of furnace, other minor energy conserving home repairs.

#### **If Head of Household is 60 or older:**

- Contact Erie County Senior Services Information and Assistance: 858-8526

#### **If Head of Household is under 60:**

- Contact the HEAP office under 60 WAP Referral Program: 858-2634

Renters may apply for Weatherization assistance, though Landlord may be asked to contribute 25% towards costs, unless Landlord is also HEAP-eligible.

### EmPower NY:

NO COST assistance for HEAP eligible households, funded through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Eligibility is based, in part, on gas and/or electric usage. Not all applicants will qualify for assistance.

Services may include:

- Replacement of Refrigerators that are 10 or more years old
- Installation of high-efficiency lighting and insulation
- Tips on how to save energy

- Call Senior Services I&A at 858-8526 for an application or for more information

### **3. Telephone Discount:**

LifeLine Program: Low-cost telephone service:

- HEAP-eligible households can receive basic service for as low as \$1.00 per month, plus per-call charges and taxes.
- Clients should complete a Lifeline application and mail it to phone company with a copy of your HEAP award letter.
- Applicants can apply, or recertify Lifeline discount using last year's HEAP eligibility notice, if current season notice is not yet received.
- Contact telephone service provider or Senior Services Information and Assistance at 858-8526 for information.

## **11. Other assistance if HEAP benefits are exhausted or program is closed**

Program Availability is subject to funding and these **programs are generally not open year-round**

**National Fuel "Neighbor for Neighbor" heating bill assistance (All heat source types):**

- Salvation Army: 883-9800 Ext. 230 (Open 9:00am to 4:30pm call for appointment) OR
- Catholic Charities: (Open 8:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.)----- 856-4494
- Must be 60 years of age or older, or disabled, or have a serious medical condition
- Must have made at least 6 payments to heating company in the last 12 months
- Must have current account balance
- Do not need a shutoff notice
- Need HEAP exhausted or HEAP denial proof

**"Care and Share" Electric Bill assistance:**

- 1-(855) 852-2736 or
- <http://www.heartshare.org/programs/energy-assistance/care.html>
- Must have a Shutoff notice on electric bill
- Must have low income
- Need HEAP exhausted or HEAP denial proof

**Emergency Aid for Families through Erie County (EAF) – 478 Main Street 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Buffalo**

- Assistance for all ages, 0% Loan based program may assist with most recent 4 months bills

Emergency Aid for Adults (EAA)- 478 Main Street 1st floor, Buffalo

- Assistance for recipients of SSI or SSD. Grant/Loan program may pay recent and/or current bills.
- Must have a current shutoff notice or be low on fuel, and exhausted all HEAP benefits for season (or HEAP is closed for season)
- Applicants whose service has been off for an extended period are not eligible
- Must bring the following to the interview:
  - Everyone in the Household ages 18 and older must be present at interview
  - Must have picture ID for anyone in household age 18 and older, and ID for anyone in household under 18
  - Proof of Rent expense or if homeowner (deed to home)
  - Current Gas, Electric, Phone bills
  - Proof of all income of the entire household for last 8 weeks (including wages, child support, SS, SSI, pension, rental income, etc.)
  - Letter from HEAP stating that benefits are exhausted/denied
  - For National Fuel assistance applicants must attain a financial statement from National Fuel before applying for EAF or EAA (go to National Fuel Office at 409 Main Street, Buffalo)
  - For National Grid or NYSEG assistance, contact electric company and tell them you are applying for EAF and request financial statement, they may send it directly to you or to EAF worker, depending on the situation

**Erie County Emergency Assistance to request placement in a temporary shelter:**

Report to Erie County Emergency Housing Unit, 158 Pearl Street, Buffalo, Monday- Friday, between 8 a.m.-4 p.m. OR

Call Erie County Crisis Services at 834-3131, after 4 p.m., or during the weekend